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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (5/29): WAITING ON AMERICAN AND
ISRAELI "NEWCOMERS"

Main Stories:

Israeli Defense Minister Barak's call for Israeli Premier Olmert to step down leads coverage in all dailies. The papers report that Olmert "refuses" to resign despite Barak's call and note that Israel might be heading towards early elections. Reporting includes official Palestinian reaction with quotes by Palestinian President Abbas that the corruption scandal is, "an internal Israeli issue," and that the PA, "will work with any Israeli government committed to the peace process." The dailies also quote Abbas' spokesperson Abu Rudyahn stating that, "our only concern is that any Israeli Premier be committed to the peace process," adding that, "what is happening in Israel will negatively influence negotiations." All dailies highlight that, "the United States reaffirmed its commitment to Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations," citing an AFP story with quotes by State Department spokesman Tom Casey. In related news, Al Ayyam's front page announces that an Israeli plan released by the Washington-based Middle East Institute, "excludes Jerusalem and claims 11.5% of West Bank land for Israel."

The May 28 announcement of US assistance to the residents of the West Bank Governorate Jenin wins prominent and positive front page coverage in all dailies and on-line news agencies in the West Bank and Gaza. All coverage highlights Consul General Walles' comments about US commitment to peace and support of the Palestinian Authority. Al Quds highlights Walles' comment that Palestinian President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad are "partners in peace." The paper continues with quotes from Walles, "that the United States realizes that the time for the establishment of a Palestinian state is overdue. As President Bush said in Sharm Al-Sheikh, we stand beside the Palestinians people who have suffered for decades [sic]."

The "homecoming" of Palestinian Security Forces to Jericho also wins front page, positive coverage in all dailies and on-line news sources. A photo of Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad dancing with security forces leads coverage in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, while Al Quds places a front page photo of Fayyad reviewing a line of forces marching in formation. Coverage quotes Fayyad stating that, "the Palestinian Authority is a home for everyone and the only title [legitimate representative] for all Palestinians." Fayyad praised the security forces and stressed that their efforts were crucial to the, "stability and progress of Palestinians." The security forces were trained by Jordanian police in Jordan with U.S. government funding.

Reports about Israeli-Palestinian truce efforts lead coverage in Al-Quds which highlights that, "there is no connection between the Palestinian prisoner swap and the Hezbollah prisoner swap with Israel." Coverage added that the Egyptian side is increasing diplomatic efforts because of fears of a breach by Palestinians of the Gaza border. Related coverage in all dailies reports that Israeli tanks and warplanes killed two Palestinians and injured five during an incursion into Gaza on May 28.

Al-Quds' front page reveals that sources close to Palestinian President Abbas deny rumors that there will be a reshuffling of his cabinet members. According to the sources, Abbas has confirmed that the rumors are untrue and that he is determined to put a stop to them.

The visit of Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa to Gaza is front page news. Speaking in Gaza on May 28, he commented that what

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he had seen is beyond human comprehension and that, "the siege on the Gaza Strip is illegal and must end immediately." Tutu is heading a high-level UN fact-finding mission to investigate a "massacre" committed by the Israeli military in November 2006, in the town of Beit Hanun, in which 19 Palestinian civilians were killed.

According to Ma'an news agency, Hamas says that the Palestinian security forces detained five Hamas activists across the West Bank on May 27. Activists were arrested in Al-Far'ah refugee camp in the Tubas Governorate, in the Bethlehem Governorate and the Jenin village of As-Sila Al-Harthiya.

Online sources reported that Palestinian President Abbas intends to issue a presidential decree barring torture in the Palestinian Territory. The statements by Abbas came following a meeting with the Palestinian Independent Committee for Citizens Rights and after the release of the 2008 Amnesty International Human Rights report.

BLOCK QUOTES:

Independent Al-Quds carries its daily editorial entitled, "The importance and necessity of evaluating the next stage" (5/29): "... today, we are facing the possibility of new Israeli elections. If Olmert leaves his position for one reason or another, negotiations will stop. We are also facing imminent American elections, which will mean a freeze of serious, external diplomatic activity that might last for a year... Faced with these realities, the ball is now in the Palestinian and Arab court. The issues need to be carefully considered; otherwise we will sit waiting on the newcomers from Israel and America!"

¶2. Independent daily Al-Ayyam runs an op-ed by veteran columnist Dr. Abulmajid Swaylam entitled, "Investment conference in Bethlehem" (5/29): "... the kind of investment that was proposed at the Bethlehem conference is problematic from a Palestinian point of view; but it might be an effective mechanism to expose the strategic Israeli policies [obstacles] imposed on the ground... Economics is not the key to political progress. The real key to economic development is a fair, political solution that will guarantee security and stability for everyone including the investors

themselves. In any case, investment is very important and we cannot wait for the end of the occupation to invest. But investment under occupation is completely different from investment without occupation."

WALLES